



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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USDA CELEBRATES HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH WITH LOCAL EVENTS

WASHINGTON, June 11, 2002 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced June as National Homeownership Month. Events are scheduled in rural communities throughout the country. During the first week of the month-long celebration, USDA Rural Development held 61 local events in 26 states.

“I am happy to share with America how Rural Development helps communities strengthen their neighborhoods through homeownership. This month-long celebration is a great time to highlight the benefits of homeownership,” said Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Mike Neruda.

The housing programs that are a part of the Rural Housing Service (RHS) began with the Housing Act of 1949. The Act sought to make homeownership available to families in rural areas. While serving only farm owners until 1961, the program is now available to any income eligible rural resident who qualifies.

RHS also administers a loan and grant program to help income eligible families make necessary repairs or improvements to their homes. In 1990, a homeownership loan guarantee was introduced to assist those with slightly higher incomes to obtain no-down payment loans from private lenders. The agency’s Mutual Self-Help Housing program enables families to build their own homes by providing technical assistance grants to groups to manage the equity-building projects.

So far in Fiscal Year 2002, nearly 8,000 households have obtained direct loans to buy or build their own homes. Another 16,500 have obtained loans with RHS guarantees. More than 7,200 have benefited from one-percent interest loans or grants to repair or improve their homes. In Fiscal Year 2001, more than 57,000 families received assistance of nearly \$3.5 billion through these programs to obtain or improve their homes in rural America.

In Nebraska, for Fiscal Year 2002 to date, a total of 374 households purchased homes through USDA Rural Development's Rural Housing Direct and Guaranteed Homeownership programs totaling \$20.5 million. Ninety-five repair loans and grants totaling \$505,000 have assisted 93 homeowners.

USDA Rural Development employees across the nation will join in special activities to mark Homeownership Month. On June 27th in Jackson, Neb., homeownership will be celebrated for a family who through the skills and labor of family and friends, constructed a home to replace the home they lost to a tornado. This is a leveraged effort with USDA Rural Development assisting through its Guaranteed Rural Housing Loan program. Homeownership will be featured in Crete, Neb. for the first homeowner of a Bar-None Housing dwelling. Bar-None Housing, owned and operated by Nebraska Housing Resource, provides for the construction of affordable housing for targeted rural/small town residents of Nebraska by utilizing prison inmate labor. Partnering was key to this endeavor with USDA Rural Development assisting via its Rural Housing Direct Loan program.

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